



Metro North Regional Employment Board

Metro North Regional Employment Board Strategic Plan FY 2013 – FY 2016

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I. Executive Summary

In the context of today's changing fiscal landscape on both the state and federal level, the Metro North REB is entering a stage of development that is guided by new opportunities as well as challenges. As it moves forward, the REB must identify creative new approaches, consider diverse sources of funding, and streamline existing systems to optimize efficiency. In addition, undertaking a renewed philosophy of continuous improvement and innovation in program implementation will be crucial to adjusting approaches in workforce development to align with the ever-changing economy.

Historically, the education and workforce development systems have been only sporadically, marginally, or indirectly connected to business needs. Although some components of the workforce development system (notably community-based training and employment programs), have a long history of aligning their training with strong employer partnerships, the K-12 and college education systems have been grounded in a philosophy of preparing people for life, by providing a broad, general education, and only targeting training to specific occupations later in the post-secondary experience. In addition, education and workforce development have struggled to keep up with changing technologies and trends in industry, often lacking critical information about where career opportunities exist and what skills and abilities are necessary to take advantage of those options. As a result, education and training are often disconnected from real-time employer needs, and as a result, unemployed youth and adults often lack the necessary skills to enter those jobs that do exist, creating a growing class of disconnected or never connected workers.

A growing recognition that the education and workforce development systems must directly address the skills gap has led to multiple efforts to work on career pathways development (e.g., the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Career Pathways programs; Pathways to Prosperity), and curriculum alignment with business needs (e.g., Massachusetts Community College Workforce Transformation Agenda (MCCWDTA), MassBioEd). The Metro North Regional Employment Board (REB) intends to work both regionally and cross-regionally with other Workforce Investment Boards to implement a sectoral approach that: 1) builds upon the strengths of the local economy, 2) capitalizes on existing efforts in career pathway development and curriculum alignment, customizing efforts to reflect regional needs, and 3) recognizes the need to directly connect the needs of business with needs of youth, unemployed adults, and the incumbent workforce in order to maximize impact.

Based on prominence in the region and current growth opportunities, the Metro North REB plans to target the following industries/occupations:

- 1) Advanced Manufacturing
- 2) Healthcare
- 3) Information Technology
- 4) Life Sciences
- 5) STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Occupations, cutting across industries

In each industry/STEM arena, the thrust of the work will be:

- 1) Partnership Development - creating the foundation for the work
- 2) Resource Development - ensuring diverse financial support for the efforts
- 3) Career Pathways Development - identifying opportunities at various entry points and related training requirements
- 4) Curriculum Alignment – ensuring education/training reflects current business needs

- 5) Knowledge-sharing – ensuring that partners and customers have access to what we have learned in order to influence and rationalize career training and career choices
- 6) Exposure to Career Options – creating opportunities for work experience or direct exposure to the work entailed in various occupations

In order to successfully implement these approaches, the REB has identified three priorities:

- 1) Infrastructure and Systems Development – ensuring sufficient capacity to accomplish goals
- 2) Alignment of Workforce and Business Needs – implementing the vision
- 3) Accountability and Visibility – ensuring performance excellence and achieving visibility

It is the REB’s intention to enhance and build working partnerships that include: employers, community colleges, vocational technical schools, secondary schools, education and training providers, community-based organizations, youth-serving organizations, career centers, trade and professional associations, representatives from labor and workforce development (including other Workforce Investment Boards) and economic development organizations. Together, we will work to develop a coherent system that develops capacity for each partner, meets industry needs, and ensures that our constituents, adults and youth, both unemployed and employed, understand the wide array of career options, can advance through education and training that prepares them for current job opportunities, and allows them to enter the workforce, grow in their jobs, and achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency.

II. The Metro North Regional Employment Board Mission and Vision

The Metro North Regional Employment Board (REB) is a public-private partnership whose mission is to enable area residents to gain the skills to maximize their economic self-sufficiency and provide employers with the workforce they need to effectively compete in the changing world economy.

III. REB Overview

The Metro North Regional Employment Board (REB), incorporated in 1995, serves as the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for the Metro North region of Massachusetts. As one of 16 local Workforce Investment Boards established in Massachusetts by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the REB was formed to: set local workforce policy, determine how state and federal funds are best used for workforce development, align the needs of employers to the needs of area residents, and oversee the Metro North One-Stop Career Centers where both job search and employer services are provided. By law, business leaders must constitute a majority of the Board with other members representing education, training, labor and economic development.

The Metro North Region consists of the following 20 cities and towns north of Boston: Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, Winthrop, and Woburn. The southern part of the region is urban and densely populated, with universities and biotech companies defining an atmosphere of growth and invention. The northern communities lie along the Route 128 belt, known for its clusters of high tech companies. The City of Cambridge, home of Harvard University and MIT and one of the pre-eminent centers of intellectual thought and innovation in this country, acts as the lead city for the Metro North region.

In 1996 the REB elected to participate in a demonstration project, funded by the United States Department of Labor and the Commonwealth, which allowed for the privatization of the delivery of a variety of employment and training services that were previously operated through state and local units of government into new entities called “One-Stop Career Centers.” Four of the sixteen workforce regions in the state elected to participate in this initial demonstration which became known as the competitive “One-Stop Career Center” model in Massachusetts. As a result, the two One-Stop Career Center operators in the Metro North region were selected and chartered through a competitive bidding process to provide services throughout the region, which continue to this date. In a decision made in December 2011, it was decided to designate only one operator, Middlesex Community College, for both career centers in the region, effective July 1, 2012. Massachusetts is now the only state that operates centers under the competitive model.

Career Source provides direct customer services through locations in Cambridge and Chelsea, and The Career Place operates in Woburn. Since their inception over 16 years ago, the Metro North Career Centers have served over 198,000 job seekers placing an average of 10,000+ in jobs per year, with a current average wage is \$23.08. Every year since FY’05, the Metro North career centers have served over 20,000 customers, reaching a high of over 23,000 customers in FY’10. These customers visit career centers an average of six times, participating in both group workshops and individualized services; this translates to over 100,000 visits to the centers each year.

Customers represent the full array of ages, from high school youth to older workers, with 30% age 35 or younger and 25% age 55 and older. They also range along the entire education spectrum, with 44% having only a high school diploma or less, but another 35% possessing a college or post-graduate degree. About 19% primarily speak languages other than English. Our centers also currently serve about 1,100 employer customers per year, list thousands of job postings, and provide a variety of other employer services, such as outplacement and on-site recruitment.

The Metro North Career Centers have been recognized for their outstanding performance. In FY’12, the centers had the second highest volume of customer visits (105,585) compared to other regions statewide, the highest number of job placements, second highest average wage, and the third highest number of individual customers served (20,255). During the last eleven years, the REB has conducted extensive customer satisfaction surveys, with an average of 81% of sampled customers rating the quality of services as “good” or “excellent.”

The REB’s Career Center Committee reviews career center performance annually, conducts a more in-depth rechartering process every three years, and establishes policies guiding career center priorities and operations. The committee also reviews feedback from quarterly Consumer Advisory Group meetings, which provides job seeker and employer feedback on career center performance and creates a forum for customer suggestions and input. The committee also reviews results from the annual customer satisfaction and employer satisfaction surveys.

In line with the intent of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the Metro North REB considers its One-Stop Career Centers the primary vehicle for workforce development service delivery in the region, and works to ensure that sufficient resources are available for center support. At the same time, Metro North has always prioritized keeping administration lean and maximizing funding for training providers, aiming to dedicate about 50% of WIA funds for training of low-income adults and dislocated workers. The REB approves training courses available for WIA enrollees and also contracts with training providers. Planning the priorities for and the allocation of federal funds is the responsibility of the REB’s Policy, Funding, and Oversight (PFO) Committee, which also determines the funding for each career center, based on a funding formula that takes into account demographic and performance factors. The Metro

North career centers are the only center in the state which compete for funding, a method designed to create incentives for performance aligned with REB priorities.

In July of 2007, in order to reduce administrative costs through merging functions, the REB became the fiscal agent for WIA funds at the request of the City of Cambridge, which is the grant recipient of those funds by federal statute. As a direct result, during the first year, approximately \$100,000 in funds previously used to administer the program were allocated instead to service providers to support direct services to customers. The Metro North REB staff currently consists of eight full-time and one-part time staff, who annually oversee and administer about \$9M in workforce funding (please see attached Organizational Chart).

Highlights of Current Initiatives

CONNECT. In June 2012, in response to a proposal from the REB on behalf of CONNECT, a consortium of service providers in the Chelsea area, USDOL awarded a three-year \$3M Workforce Innovation Fund grant to the REB. The CONNECT Partnership represents an innovative strategy focused on co-location and bundling of complementary services for local residents (especially Chelsea, Revere, and Everett) in order to increase the impact of services in addressing multiple obstacles to family self-sufficiency. CONNECT is a partnership of six organizations that includes: Bunker Hill Community College; Career Source (a Metro North career center); The Neighborhood Developers (a community development corporation that provides affordable housing and, financial stability, and other services); Metro Credit Union; Centro Latino (an adult basic education/ESOL provider); and Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (a homeless prevention and housing services organization). This partnership model is one that, if demonstrated to be successful, could potentially be replicated in other communities serving similar populations, such as Lawrence, Springfield, and Fall River/New Bedford.

Advanced Manufacturing. In June 2012, the REB took the initial steps that led to the development of the **Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium**, a collaboration now jointly led by the Metro North REB, and the Merrimack Valley, Greater Lowell, and North Shore Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The membership of the consortium, which is designed to support and advance the manufacturing industry in the northeast region of Massachusetts, currently includes: representatives from the four WIBs; their seven career centers; local vocational technical schools; Northern Essex, North Shore, and Middlesex Community Colleges; the Boston Tooling and Machining Association; the Office of the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development; Commonwealth Corporation; and Custom Group and about 15 other manufacturing companies. As the consortium develops, membership will potentially grow to include representatives of four-year public and private universities and colleges, high schools, adult basic education and other training providers, economic development organizations, labor, other business associations, and additional companies.

The REB is also among several organizations across the state to be awarded a grant from MassDevelopment as part of their **AMP It Up!** campaign. AMP It Up! is an initiative aimed at dispelling widespread misperceptions about the nature of today's manufacturing jobs by educating youth about the wide range and abundance of advanced manufacturing jobs available throughout Massachusetts. Using a hands-on approach, the REB will use the funds to introduce youth enrolled in GED programs to the field of advanced manufacturing through a combination of information sessions, workshops, company tours, and exposure to machining at training sites. Funds will also be used to develop educational materials and to build an Advanced Manufacturing Resource on the REB's website.

Life Sciences. In April 2012, a collaboration of four workforce regions (Boston, Metro North, Metro South/West and South Shore), led by the City of Boston, was awarded federal funding for the SCILS

(Skilled Careers in Life Sciences) Initiative. Made possible by a four-year \$5M H1B Technical Skills training grant from the US Department of Labor, SCILS will deliver life sciences training to 360 participants through programs at Boston University and Quincy College, help fund 300 internships through the Mass Life Sciences Center, and develop the capacity of the region's one-stop career centers to better connect customers with the life sciences sector.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). In June 2010, the REB hosted a STEM event focused on best practices in STEM and preparing our youth for the future. Five companies were invited to be on a panel to discuss best practices in the STEM field with an audience comprised of businesses, schools, and career center staff. In June 2011, the REB held its second annual STEM event, with 10 employers representing different STEM fields participating. In a "speed networking" format, over 80 attendees, representing area high school and vocational technical school guidance counselors, science and math department heads, and career centers, rotated among employer tables. Each employer offered information on their internships, mentoring programs, and job opportunities, and engaged in informal Q and A sessions with attendees.

In addition to the STEM events, the REB also launched the "**Metro North Online STEM Resource**," featured on the REB website and containing information on some of the most effective and well-established STEM-related programs in the region. This interactive resource contains a wide range of interlinked information, including profiles of well-established STEM programs offered by companies in the region; a STEM activity guide; information on how to prepare for a school-based STEM activity as well as to host a school visit; and STEM-related announcements. Through this effort, the REB aimed to support the creation of business-school partnerships, and to provide selected resources and practical information to support those partnerships.

In December, a STEMPower Network proposal, submitted by the Central MA WIB on behalf of all 16 WIBs statewide, including Metro North, was approved for funding by the Department of Higher Education's STEM Pipeline Fund. With the overall goal of heightening awareness and interest in STEM occupations, the program supports regional STEM coaches responsible for career center staff development and entails co-investment of WIA training funds in STEM occupations.

Healthcare Partnership. With the leadership of the **Metro North Healthcare Partnership**, the REB researched and collected labor market information on the Healthcare industry, resulting in the creation of a "Metro North Healthcare Career Ladders" tool, most recently updated in 2011. The Healthcare Career Ladders tool was designed to raise awareness of healthcare career options among youth in in-school and out-of-school programs, as well as jobseekers and training seekers served through the Metro North Career Centers and area training providers. The tool displays the different occupations in the healthcare field, their corresponding wages, and the steps along a career ladder for each occupation.

In response to a grant opportunity, the Healthcare Partnership was formed in FY'09 in order to implement a program of activities, including the development and implementation of a phlebotomy training program at Middlesex Community College, and the initial stages of developing a clinical lab technician program and medical laboratory technician Associate's Degree program, and playing a role in the eventual formation of Middlesex's Academy of Health Professions.

Adult Basic Education. The REB participates in the DESE procurement of adult basic education programs operated in Metro North, and acts as the fiscal agent for the Career Pathways programs. REB staff is participating on the Metro North College and Career Partnership (MNCCP) Steering Committee which oversees a project helping ABE students transition to post-secondary education. In July, an ABE Transitions Committee will be implemented as a successor to this grant-based committee.

Youth Initiatives. The Metro North Career Centers operate the School to Career Connecting Activities program, connecting youth in area high schools to internships, targeting opportunities in priority industries. With resources declining since FY’09, service levels have fallen from about 300 to about 120 youth served per year. Youth staff are currently working with students in the following communities: Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, Somerville, and Woburn, in many cases exposing them to their very first employment experience.

Under what we call “WIA Transition Services,” the career centers visit community-based and other local organizations to conduct outreach to high school dropouts and other disconnected youth to encourage them to return to school, attend alternative WIA programs, and/or to assist them with job search. In FY’12, this outreach program served almost 500 youth in the region.

Under WIA Youth programming, career center youth staff provide career exploration and employment readiness workshops and case management services to about 230 in-school and out-of-school youth enrolled in about 13 programs each year. Youth enrolled in these programs are high school dropouts (55%), most of whom lack basic skills (63%), and many with a disability (40%). Seventy-five percent (75%) of WIA Youth funds are dedicated to serving out-of-school youth, to assist them in attaining a GED, exploring career options, and pursuing further education opportunities.

The Metro North REB also supports YouthWorks programs in six communities: Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, and Somerville. In FY’12, over 500 youth were placed in summer jobs in Metro North.

The Metro North Youth Council meets bimonthly to coordinate these regional youth activities and to support career exploration events, such as Construction Career Day.

IV. Strategic Planning Process

One overarching goal of the strategic planning process was to align the work of the REB with the high-profile industries that make their home in our region. At one end of the region is the City of Cambridge, home of some of the most stellar universities in the world, as well as a hub for research and innovation, while to the north and west are found concentrations of high tech companies, developing technologies used world-wide. An initial examination of the volume and concentration of employment, as well as current demand and future opportunities for growth, led to a REB decision to explore the development of workforce strategies for these key industries:

- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Life Sciences

These are, coincidentally, the four industries outlined in the Massachusetts’ Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s 2012 – 2016 state workforce plan as having a high demand and potential for growth, thus confirming the impact of these industries beyond the Metro North region, as well. Like the state’s workforce plan, which also addresses issues in the STEM fields by incorporating goals identified in the Massachusetts STEM plan, the REB also integrates STEM occupations as an additional area for concentration within its strategic plan.

Using this attention to industries and STEM as a starting point, the REB's strategic planning process began with a REB Quarterly Meeting in June 2012, where the board brainstormed about REB direction and issues to be addressed within the strategic plan. A major theme that surfaced from this meeting was the importance of partnerships, potentially cross-regional, and strengthening the connection between employer needs and workforce development initiatives, with the concept of forming industry groups gaining traction, but in the context of connecting it with the needs of the job seeker population, who might have varying degrees of preparation for entering identified industries and related occupations. Ideas for how to assess industry need and research best practices were generated, and it was noted that the volatile economy meant that the plan would need to be flexible to stay in sync with industry trends. Six board members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, then volunteered to form a Strategic Planning Workgroup which met in late July to assist in planning the strategic planning process, including research methods and the design/focus of a strategic planning retreat.

The board met again for a strategic planning retreat in September 2012, where some of the benefits and challenges of forming and maintaining industry consortia were discussed, along with the need for industry champions and the right partners at the table, as well as a career ladder approach to ensure access to a variously skilled/educated workforce. The need to coordinate with existing structures and initiatives, instead of duplicating them, was also emphasized. Strategies for ensuring employer engagement were also generated. Further discussion ensued at the winter board meeting in December 2012, with board members helping to clarify approaches to the work within each identified industry, adding more thoughts on employer engagement and successful partnerships.

Based on the Board's feedback, the REB's strategic plan addresses regional workforce development issues through industry consortia groups that will engage education and training providers, career centers, businesses, and any other necessary entities to assist in the development of strategies to address current, new, and evolving issues. Considering what is unknown about the fiscal climate and the impact on the aforementioned audiences, it was determined that a solid plan must both identify strategies to leverage various stakeholders, as well as allow room for appropriate flexibility to adapt, or react to, changing needs along the way. Moreover, the plan is structured to tackle issues through interconnected levels of change:

- Development (Infrastructure and Systems Development);
- Implementation (Alignment of Workforce and Business Needs);
- Reporting (Accountability and Visibility)

Once these priorities for the strategic plan were determined, REB staff collected and compiled quantitative and qualitative data from existing reports, online sources, focus groups, employer and other stakeholder interviews, and various committee and community meetings, including, for example, the Youth Council, meetings with education and training providers, youth services providers, the Healthcare Partnership, and the STEM Partnership. These findings were then used to develop appropriate and measurable strategic goals and objectives.

V. Metro North Labor Market Analysis – the General Context

Metro North Demographics. The Metro North region has the second largest labor force in Massachusetts, with about 424,452 workers; as of July 2012, about 22,351 of these workers were without jobs. Of these, 8,551 were receiving unemployment benefits while seeking work, making

Metro North the region with the fourth highest number of claimants in the state, the same rank as the year prior, but dropping from ranking first in the number of claimants for the two years prior to that. Although the economy has improved, and Metro North appears to be faring slightly better than some other regions, there is still a substantial volume of unemployed workers in the region.

The 2010 Census reveals that the regional population is 761,431, a 2.5% increase (18,212) over 2000, accounting for about 12% of the population of Massachusetts. The southern and easternmost communities are characterized by a diverse mix of ethnicities, ranging from 64% nonwhite or Latino populations in Chelsea, to 3% in North Reading, a community in the northern, primarily white, suburban tier of the region. Overall, the nonwhite population represents 23.5% of the total population, an increase from 17% in 2000. The Latino population constitutes 10.1% of the entire population, an increase of 57.2% from the total number of Latinos in Metro North in 2000. The Asian population notably increased from 6.0% in 2000 to 8.6% of total population in 2010.

Not surprisingly, given the presence of so many colleges and universities in the area, educational attainment in the region is high on the average, with an estimated 44% of the population age 25 and above having a bachelor's, professional, or doctoral degree, compared to 38% statewide, based on 2006-2010 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey. Communities with the highest proportion of residents with BA/BS degrees or above include: Cambridge (72%), Winchester (70%), and Belmont (67%) and Arlington (65%). At the other end of the educational spectrum, communities with the highest proportion of residents with less than a high school diploma include: Chelsea (36%), Everett (23%), Revere (22%), Medford (17%), Malden (15%), and Somerville (10%), thereby making educational attainment and vocational/skills training an important element for workforce development for the region.

In line with higher educational attainment, the majority of Metro North residents are better off financially than other parts of the state. The median poverty rate among Metro North communities, based on 2010 Census data, stands at 7%. The city within the region with the most families living in poverty is Chelsea (36%), followed by Revere (17%) as a distant second, and compared to a low of 2% in Wilmington.

Employment and Leading Industries. Metro North employers account for almost 12% of the state's workers and for 20% of the state's high-tech jobs, two-thirds of which are found in leading industries where the proportion of scientists, engineers, and technicians is twice the average for all industries¹. The chart below (Table 1) includes the industries for which the Metro North Region has the highest levels of employment compared to the rest of the state.

Employment in the top three industries, including Professional, Technical, and Scientific, Healthcare, and Education, accounts for about 36% of regional employment. The location quotient (the ratio of an industry's proportional share of regional employment compared to its proportional share of statewide employment), which measures the relative concentration of an industry, indicates that Professional and Technical (1.7), Information (1.7) and Education Services (1.3) are more prevalent within Metro North than within the state as a whole as are Administrative and Waste Services and wholesale Trade to a lesser extent. Manufacturing shows the sixth largest number of employees in the region; while overshadowed by other industries in this comparison within Metro North, when compared to manufacturing in three other regions in Northeastern Massachusetts, Metro North is second only to Merrimack Valley, which employs only 1500 more workers.

¹ MA Department of Workforce Development, Division of Career Services, *SDA Long-Term Job Outlook through 2008*.

Table 1: Metro North Leading Industries Compared to Massachusetts (Ordered by Employment Volume)

Industry <i>In rank order by employment for Metro North Region</i>	Average Employment		Percent Total Employment		Metro North Regional Location Quotient*2011
	MA	Metro North	MA	Metro North	
Total, All Industries	3,205,277	375,749	100%	100%	
54- Professional and Technical	262,198	52,050	8.7%	13.9%	1.69
62-Health Care and Social Assistance	532,934	51,584	16.6%	13.7%	0.83
61- Educational Services	282,818	41,850	8.8%	11.1%	1.26
44-45- Retail Trade	344,751	38,245	10.8%	10.2%	0.95
72- Accommodation and Food Services	282,695	27,373	8.8%	7.3%	0.83
31-33-Manufacturing	255,561	24,419	7.9%	6.5%	0.82
56-Administrative and Waste Services	169,288	23,778	5.3%	6.3%	1.20
51- Information	89,916	17,773	2.8%	4.7%	1.69
42-Wholesale Trade	124,387	16,193	3.9%	4.3%	1.11

* Based on third quarter for 2011, utilizing 2-digit NAICS code, Employment and Wage (ES-202) data, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Average employment increased by about 6,706 jobs between the third quarters of 2010 and 2011, in sync with the slowly recovering economy; the top three industries by total employment accounted for more than half of these—almost 3,900 jobs, or 58% of the total employment increase for Metro North during that time period, as follows: Education (1,782), Professional and Technical Services (1,087), and Health Services (1,030). At the industry sector level, Trade, Transportation and Utilities added 1,196 jobs, compared Education and Health Services sector (+2,812) and Professional and Business Services (+1,766). There were no significant job losses within leading industries.

Skills/Education Requirements and Training Occupations. Given the rapidly changing economy, each year education and training plays a progressively more prominent role for job seekers. Residents in a number of communities within the region have significantly low levels of educational attainment. Many of the fastest growing occupations, such as registered nurses and computer engineers, tend to require college degrees, and now in many cases require four-year degrees, with the exception of human services and home health aide positions. Propitiously, a number of occupations projected to have a high rate of replacement job openings are concentrated in more entry-level positions, many that only require on-the-job training for a short period of time, e.g., in retail salesperson, waiter, cashiers, food services. Occupations such as administrative assistants, customer service representatives, and nurse aides require longer on-the-job training or participation in training programs and are expected to hire high rates of replacement workers.

The sheer volume of employment in the healthcare and life sciences, education, and information services (IT), along with moderate to strong growth rates, suggest that occupations serving these industries would be good candidates for training program development. In addition, the growing number of retirees, including executive level workers, requires individuals to be more educated and higher-skilled in order to compete in the workforce and replace outgoing workers. A major challenge is developing a pipeline of workers that can enter certain industries at entry-level and middle-skilled

occupations so they can begin earning a wage, as they develop their skills and participate in additional training in order to move upwards within their industry. These workers need to be ready to replace either retiring workers or the incumbents that will move upwards to replace their colleagues that will retire.

Parts of the Metro North region are rich in racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity, which can present challenges for access to jobs requiring intermediate-to-strong English skills. Compared to more suburban, predominantly white, non-Latino cities such as Wilmington or Arlington, other parts of the region such as Chelsea and Malden have high percentages of residents who speak a language other than English at home, many of whom admit that they “do not speak English well.”² It is important that language skills alone do not act as a barrier to employment or career advancement.

Over the years, the REB has promoted the development of concurrent ESOL/occupational skills training programs to help address this need, and has also promoted cross-referrals with ESOL/adult education providers funded by DESE. ESOL for the workplace allows employees to more easily gain functional English language skills needed relative to their jobs/careers in order to communicate better and progress more quickly within the workplace. Some WIA training funds are targeted exclusively for ESOL/education services. In the coming year, the REB plans to implement an ABE Transitions Committee which will focus on creating pathways for customers with limited English/limited literacy to the higher education and training services (with a focus on key industries) that they will ensure successful access to the workplace.

Youth Employment. Across the country, there is rising poverty and economic hardship among children and young adults. Recent census data points to an alarming increase in the number of children who are poor or near poor, with more than one in five children under age 18 living in poverty, and 44 percent of children living in families with annual household incomes below \$44,700 for a family of four. According to the Center for American Action Progress, young adults ages 18 to 24 in the U.S. are falling into poverty at higher rates than older adults. Roughly 22 percent of these young people lived in poverty in 2010, and of these, almost one in three were young African Americans, while more than a quarter were young Hispanic Americans. Census data also reveals that more young adults ages 25 to 34 are moving back into their parents’ homes, with 5.9 million young adults living with their parents at some time during the year.

In Massachusetts, the poverty rate among youth under the age of 18 is 13.3% compared to the national rate (20.1%). Specifically, the Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, Somerville, and Cambridge communities have the highest concentrations of youth living in poverty in the Metro North region, with Chelsea leading.

Contributing to economic hardship among youth is the steady deterioration of the summer job market for adolescents ages 16-19, which has declined over the last decade, and which is at an all-time low across the nation. Traditionally a summer job is the first experience in the job market for many teenagers. However, the current limitations of the market have forced youth to compete with higher skilled, older workers for entry level positions and other jobs usually open to youth and young adults entering the job market for the first time, leaving youth without the work experience they need.

Today’s changing U.S. economy requires youth to earn a high school diploma and some form of postsecondary credential to compete for the types of jobs actually available. Additionally, youth that

² US Census Bureau. American Fact Finder (2010). *Population and Housing Narrative Profile: 2008-2010*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

manage to successfully graduate from high school often lack a clear grasp of potential career options and realistic opportunities, making it challenging for them to settle on a clear career path and pursue suitable post-secondary education. Over the last year, the REB has also heard an increasing number of accounts from youth staff who state that employers simply do not wish to hire youth under the age of 18, primarily because labor regulations make scheduling complex and because paperwork is more onerous when serving youth under age 18.

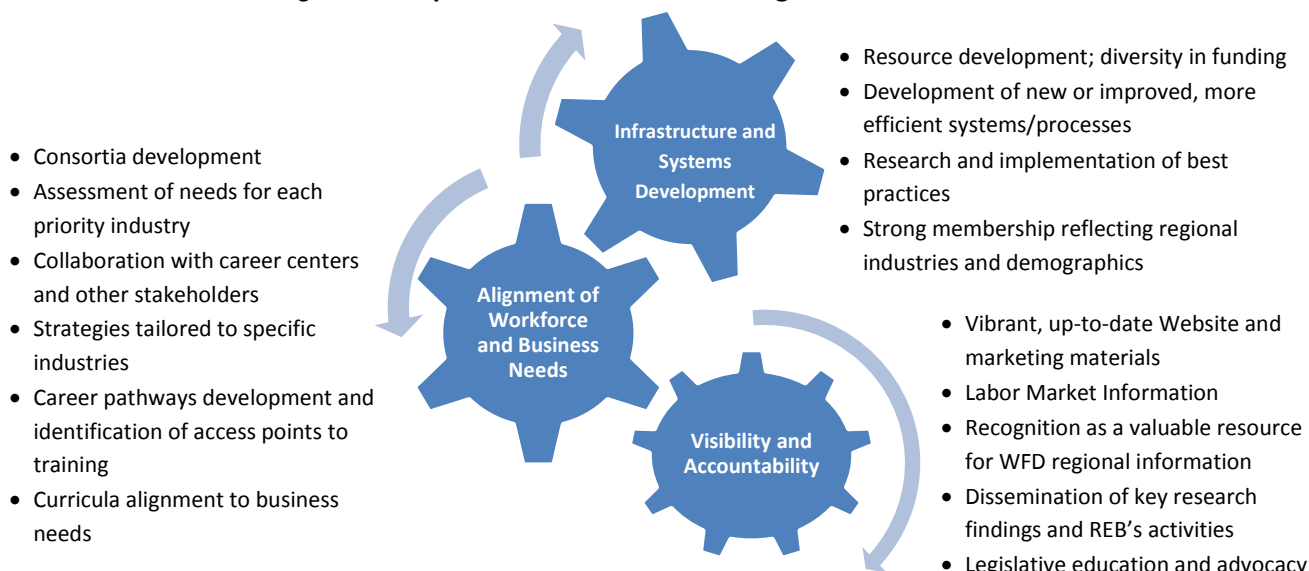
VI. Strategic Priorities: FY 2013 - FY 2016

The REB's new priorities for FY 2013 – FY 2016 are as follows:

- Priority 1: Infrastructure and Systems Development (Development)
- Priority 2: Alignment of Workforce and Business Needs (Implementation)
- Priority 3: Accountability and Visibility (Reporting)

These areas are interconnected and clearly interdependent. Priorities 1 and 2 are closely tied to infrastructure, both internally and externally, including processes, systems and documentation. The first two priorities also encompass capacity-building and relationship-building to supply and direct the work. Priority 3 focuses on performance excellence and on implementing modern and novel methods for connecting to businesses and other audiences through technology and other media in ways that will be valuable to them. The last priority also boosts regional accountability and knowledge and information-sharing to advance the REB's efforts overall.

Figure 1: Snapshot of Metro North Strategic Activities



Priority 1: Infrastructure and Systems Development (The Development Stage)

The importance of developing a strong and solid foundation in order to address issues within the workforce development system cannot be understated. To ensure this basic foundation, the REB has set workforce-related goals and objectives that will help develop resources and revenue for the Metro

North REB and its career centers as well as for the partnerships established to improve the broader workforce development system.

Moreover, recruiting new board members reflective of priority industries (and more effectively engaging existing board members) will assist in strengthening the REB's connection to businesses in Metro North. In addition, improving the efficiency and effectiveness in the REB's work will free staff time to work on industry initiatives and to explore best practices and innovative approaches, which in turn will be crucial to continued resource development. Some of these objectives will cut across industries, while others will be specific to particular industries.

Priority 2: Alignment of Workforce and Business Needs (The Implementation Stage)

Upon developing the foundation, the REB will implement strategies to better align the needs of workforce and businesses. One goal and its relevant objectives will focus on identifying career pathways that help support workers' transitions from various points on the education spectrum into career ladders within the workforce. The career pathways tools that are developed will also clarify the education, training, and other requirements necessary to scaling the ladders, as well as the related career opportunities for Metro North's current and emerging workforce. Another goal will concentrate on aligning education/training curricula with business needs so that workers are well-prepared to enter and advance in the workforce. Undeniably, businesses will play a major role in successful implementation of these strategies and, therefore, engaging businesses to participate in the workforce development system is of prime importance. Taking into consideration that businesses may feel "tapped out," it is important to utilize employers' time wisely, develop strategies that are convenient for them, and highlight the value employers will gain by participating.

The career centers are the heart of Metro North's workforce development system. The Metro North REB believes in investing in its career centers and will continue to do so in aligning workforce and business needs. Considering that each priority industry has different issues that need to be addressed in the implementation stage, objectives will be specific to each priority industry as well as to our other priority area, STEM. *(Please refer to the Benchmarking Chart following this narrative for more detail.)*

Industry Consortia and Partnership Development

The demand for jobs continues at a high volume, while there are relatively few jobs available, at least for those who are entry-level or "middle-skilled," with less than an Associate's degree. Due to the high competition for jobs, particularly those with quality wages, the REB recognizes that it is crucial to better align the skills of job seekers with industry needs, as well prepare individuals to compete for well-paying jobs and pursue meaningful careers. As previously mentioned, the REB will either develop or, if appropriate, partner in existing industry consortia, with a focus on leading industries that will bring training providers, career centers, adult education institutions, community colleges, vocational technical schools, businesses, and labor representatives to the table to address relevant skills gaps. The partnerships/consortia will help identify ways to direct job seekers towards industries or businesses where job openings actually exist and create strategies to better align services, align education/skills training curricula, and to maximize hands-on training opportunities to allow them to more successfully compete for these positions.

Advanced Manufacturing

One of the key industries the REB is directing its focus on is advanced manufacturing. While advanced manufacturing is not among the industries with the very highest employment levels in the Metro North

region, there are about 24,419 workers employed in manufacturing in Metro North, and the industry has identified a critical need for new workers to replace older, highly-skilled workers who are about to retire. In addition there is a concerted effort among the federal and state government to invest in bringing more manufacturing jobs to the U.S. and Massachusetts.

The location quotient for manufacturing in the Metro North Region is .82 (10% of MA) and 1.34 (33%), for the northeastern Massachusetts region, indicating this industry's significance within the respective regions and the state as a whole. Manufacturing jobs within the area have an average wage of \$1,418 per week or close to \$75,000 per year, further underscoring the industry as an important economic driver for the state and for the individuals employed within it. In Metro North, positions such as electronic assemblers could receive a starting wage of \$18-25 an hour. CNC machinists could make up to \$1,900/week or \$100,000/year.

According to The Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University report, *Staying Power II: A Report Card on Manufacturing in Massachusetts 2012*, manufacturers in the state employ a workforce that is aging faster than that of the rest of the economy (Bluestone et al., 2012). As stated by the report, the proportion of the manufacturing workforce in Massachusetts age 45 and above has swelled from 40.5% in 2000 to nearly 54% in 2010. More than a fifth of the workforce – nearly 59,000 of the current 250,000 employees in this sector -- are now at least 55 years old.

Through participating in focus groups and telephone polls, a number of manufacturing employers in the region reported to the REB that they plan to grow by up to 20 percent in the next 5-10 years. Others reported that, while they do not plan to grow, they do wish to improve their equipment or other capital, lean manufacturing processes, or worker training. Positions such as CNC machinists, machine operators, quality inspectors, manufacturing engineers and grinders are areas where employers identified potential vacancies. Common challenges (in addition to the high cost of doing business in the state) included a lack of highly-qualified workers, low capacity to effectively recruit workers, and a lack of younger workers interested in manufacturing careers to name a few. Employers stated a need for training for aging workers to pass on their knowledge to younger workers and ESOL education for workers as well.

As a founding partner of the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium, the REB will develop strategies to continuously collect insights into employer needs, promote occupations within the industry as a viable career choice, and to develop economical and accessible training opportunities to enable workers to have an opportunity for meaningful careers.

Life Sciences

The life sciences industry is one of the largest industries in Metro North, with about 27,000 employees in the region. As an asset within the region, it makes sense to leverage this industry by strengthening connections with employers and building bridges to valuable training, in order to develop qualified workers from diverse populations and provide other resources to support the field.

The primary stages for the development of a Life Sciences consortium will center on the following objectives:

- 1) Information Gathering and Needs Assessment:
 - a. Gain access to real-time labor market information to identify where current job openings exist or will exist, particularly against the backdrop of an aging workforce
 - b. Identify both employer and employee needs

- c. Identify barriers to entering the Life Sciences industry
- 2) Capacity and Resource Development:
 - a. Form a regional or cross-regional Life Sciences partnership comprising businesses, labor, colleges/universities, community colleges, vocational technical schools, professional and trade associations, education/training providers, Workforce Investment Boards, and career centers. The current Advisory Council for the SCILS project, with many of these partners already at the table could potentially morph into a consortium that is sustained beyond the term of the grant.
 - b. On behalf of employer partners, apply for grant opportunities such as the Workforce Training Fund and Workforce Competitiveness trust fund for technical assistance and capacity-building of the incumbent workforce
 - c. Identify new financial resources to support building career pathways for entry-level and middle-skilled job seekers, as well as for career changers
 - d. Support and expand current efforts by MassBioEd and the Massachusetts Community College Workforce Transformation Agenda (MCCWDTA) to align educational/training curricula
- 3) Intensive Employer Engagement:
 - a. Replicate the efforts of the NE Advanced Manufacturing Consortium and apply lessons learned
 - b. Build connections with individuals within companies that are at the decision-making level
 - c. Utilize employers as a resource for real-time labor market information; in turn, act as a resource to employers for labor market trends
 - d. Connect employers to qualified workers from diverse populations representing the full educational spectrum, including those most in need (WIA, Veterans)
 - e. Broker relationships among employers and other stakeholders in order to build employer capacity for training and recruitment

Preliminary research conducted in summer and fall 2012 regarding the needs and opportunities within the industry, with about 10 employers surveyed, revealed occupations where growth or replacement jobs are expected: manufacturing technicians, quality control technicians, medical lab technicians, and chemistry technicians; most represent the middle-skills and just above the middle-skill level. Quality control positions, with significant perceived demand, were viewed variously as middle-skilled or requiring more advanced skills. In response to a potential program design focused on returning veterans, a number of companies expressed an interest in considering veterans for job openings. In addition, employers reported that for many of their available entry level and middle-skill positions, they would hire job seekers with a high school diploma and relevant certification or Associate's degree with a minimum of 6-12 months of related on-the-job experience. The sector with the greatest expected growth is bio-manufacturing.

Healthcare

The healthcare industry continues to have the highest employment in MA and the second highest in Metro North, under the Professional, Technical, and Scientific industry, with 51,584 workers employed in the Metro North region. When compared to the state as a whole, the location quotient for healthcare (the Healthcare and Social Assistance Industry Sector) in the Metro North region is .83 (13.7% of Metro North's employment). The table below shows that private hospitals, offices of physicians, nursing care facilities, and home healthcare services have the highest number of jobs in the Metro North region within the healthcare industry. The location quotients in this table compare the concentrations within each industry in Metro North with the concentration of employment within the industry for the country as a whole. Again, a value of 1.0 means the concentration is the same as the country as a whole.

Table 2: Occupational Employment in Healthcare Industry (2010-2012)*

NAICS Code	Description	2010 Jobs	2012 Jobs	Change	% Change	2012 National Location Quotient	2012 Avg Annual Wage
622110	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals (Private)	12,272	12,472	200	2%	0.94	\$69,128
621111	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)	5,296	5,391	95	2%	0.74	\$117,008
623110	Nursing Care Facilities	4,830	4,667	163	-3%	0.94	\$45,671
621610	Home Health Care Services	2,817	3,245	428	15%	0.86	\$49,495
621210	Offices of Dentists	2,685	2,629	-56	-2%	0.98	\$72,377
621910	Ambulance Services	1,315	1,386	71	5%	2.73	\$51,683
622310	Specialty (except Psychiatric and Substance Abuse) Hospitals (Private)	1,336	1,367	31	2%	2.11	\$73,671
623210	Residential Mental Retardation Facilities	943	1,224	281	30%	1.05	\$32,773
623312	Homes for the Elderly	877	949	72	8%	0.86	\$31,724

* Economic Modeling Specialists Intl., Custom-Prepared LMI data, 2013

As shown in Table 2, Home Health Care Services added the highest number of jobs from 2010 to 2012. Regionally, certain zip codes within the communities of Burlington (2012 location quotient compared nationally is 9.26), Cambridge (location quotient is 8.85), and Winchester (location quotient is 3.64) demonstrate the highest healthcare employment concentration in Metro North. The sheer volume of employment in the healthcare sector virtually demands a REB focus on the healthcare industry. Further, the growing number of retirees in the healthcare workforce in combination with the growth in the aging population in need of healthcare services also presents future workforce areas to address.

Despite the economic recession, employment in the healthcare sector continued to grow between December of 2009 and December of 2010. Healthcare employment in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy New England City and Town Area (NECTA) Bureau of Labor Statistics region increased by over 10,000 jobs. Current demand occupations identified by hospitals and other healthcare providers in the region included medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory technicians, pharmacists, radiation and imaging technicians, clinical nurse educators, certified physician assistants and advanced clinical practitioners. Area hospitals continued to increase the educational and credential requirements for many of these job openings. Fifty-four percent (54%) of all 2010 job postings in this sector required a minimum of an Associate's Degree. Always in demand were certified nursing assistants and personal and home health/home care aides.

Healthcare, a robust and ever-changing industry, is being transformed again as Massachusetts enacted Chapter 224 of the Acts of 2012, "An Act Improving the Quality of Health Care and Reducing Costs Through Increased Transparency, Efficiency, and Innovation." Six years after MA passed the significant healthcare coverage reform law, MA is the first state in the country to enact healthcare cost containment legislation. While the Act focuses on cost containment, it also lays a foundation for reforming our healthcare delivery system. "The healthcare system is transitioning from a model based on acute-care hospitals as the central focus of care delivery to one in which community-based

institutions address the longer-term health maintenance needs of our aging population.”³ The Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund was also established by this law. The goals of the fund include: supporting and implementing programs to enhance healthcare worker retention rates; addressing workforce shortages; improving employment in the healthcare industry for low-wage workers; and providing training, educational, or career ladder services. REB staff attended the listening session held by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) concerning how to prioritize the potential uses of the fund; the REB will continue to track changes in workforce and training needs as healthcare is reformed.

The REB convened the Healthcare Partnership in October 2012 and January 2013 to discuss the current needs of local employers and educators, and to begin to analyze how healthcare reform will affect the workforce. Community health clinics are in transition and changing over to the patient-centered medical home model. This model is designed to promote comprehensive, coordinated, patient-centered care delivered by teams of primary care providers, including physicians and nurses.⁴ Hospitals are also in transition, becoming Accountable Care Organizations, which promote the same kind of delivery of care as the patient-centered medical home model. This transformation in delivery of care has increased the number of IT staff needed to work with electronic medical records, which now need to be available remotely. Jobseekers with nursing and IT backgrounds, or current nurses with IT backgrounds, are ideal for these IT positions. Another area of the workforce that may grow is the need for more community health workers. Community health workers could assist in relaying information, be educators, and offer informational referrals to patients. Other healthcare workforce changes discussed were that staff working in the front of the clinics (medical receptionist, medical assistant, or patient access representative) may need to do more, assessing patient health literacy and working more with patients. Lastly, nurses may take on different roles leading these teams of different healthcare disciplines to deliver patient-centered care. There is still a need for more nurses in the workforce (particularly in long-term care); however, employers are often hiring nurses with baccalaureate degrees over those with associate degrees. Incumbent nurses may need to raise their academic credentials, and new nurses need to enter the workforce with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing to be competitive candidates.

The REB continues to strengthen and recruit more members for the Healthcare Partnership, and to provide opportunities for hospitals, long-term care associations, health clinics, educators, and career centers to align workforce needs and create innovative strategies to address healthcare reform in a region leading in the healthcare industry.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

The STEM Partnership is focused on promoting knowledge about and interest in pursuing occupations that require skills in science, technology, engineering, and math. Metro North is a region rich with STEM employers and higher education. The location quotient for STEM (using the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry as a proxy for STEM occupations) in the Metro North Region is 1.69 (13.9% of Metro North’s employment). With about 52,050 workers employed in occupations relating to STEM, the REB has made it a priority to support the development of a highly educated and skilled workforce that is grounded in the subject knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and math.

As of June 2012, 206,900 individuals were officially unemployed in MA. While there are job opportunities available, a significant portion of current job openings require highly skilled workers in

³ Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development Plan, The Department of Higher Education, 2012

⁴ Massachusetts Patient-Centered Medical Home Initiative, www.Mass.gov.

STEM. Despite relatively high unemployment, there is still an inability to supply employers with a labor force that meets the skill requirements necessary to fill STEM positions.⁵

In order to identify specific STEM occupations that are needed, and to analyze job growth in Metro North, the REB used LMI information developed by the Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. (EMSI). EMSI defines STEM using eight high-level occupational categories:

- Computer specialists
- Mathematical science occupations
- Engineers
- Drafters, engineering technicians, and mapping technicians
- Life scientists
- Physical scientists
- Social scientists and related occupations
- Life, physical, and social science technicians

The table below shows computer occupations, life scientists, and engineers have the highest number of jobs within STEM in the region. More specifically, certain zip codes within the communities of Cambridge (2010 location quotient compared nationally is 7.29), Watertown (location quotient 4.74), and Burlington (location quotient 4.01) show some of the highest STEM employment concentrations in Metro North.

*Table 3: Metro North Employment in STEM Occupations**

SOC	Description	2010 Jobs	2012 Jobs	Change	% Change	Median Hourly	Avg. Hourly
15-1000	Computer Occupations	22,908	24,762	1,854	8%	\$46.38	\$47.72
19-1000	Life Scientists	4,411	4,930	519	12%	\$42.76	\$47.63
17-2000	Engineers	7,975	8,288	313	4%	\$48.41	\$49.61
19-4000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Technicians	3,494	3,756	262	7%	\$24.18	\$26.16
19-2000	Physical Scientists	1,964	2,082	118	6%	\$45.48	\$47.28
19-3000	Social Scientists and Related Workers	1,638	1,715	77	5%	\$38.50	\$39.88
15-2000	Mathematical Science Occupations	761	805	44	6%	\$43.20	\$46.32
17-3000	Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	3,311	3,342	31	1%	\$28.97	\$29.95
Total		46,462	49,680	3,218	7%	\$43.11	\$44.85
STATE TOTAL		244,694	259,608	14,914	6%	\$38.80	\$40.28

* Economic Modeling Specialists Intl., Custom-Prepared LMI data, 2013

Research shows there is a continuing, significant need to develop a stronger STEM workforce.⁶ The REB convened the Metro North STEM partnership in June and November of 2012 in order to reinvigorate the partnership and to discuss the current needs of local employers, educators, and the career centers. Common themes discovered through individual interviews and targeted questions to the partnership were the need to inspire youth and adults to enter STEM fields, to identify the skills necessary that cut across all sectors in STEM, and to support educators and strengthen students' abilities in math.

⁵ Jobs Creation Commission Final Report, Jobs Creation Commission pursuant to Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2008 as amended by Section 127 of Chapter 359 of the Acts of 2010, 2012

⁶ Jobs Creation Commission Final Report, Jobs Creation Commission pursuant to Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2008 as amended by Section 127 of Chapter 359 of the Acts of 2010, 2012

To address student retention rates at post-secondary STEM programs, and the need to support educators and students to succeed in math, the REB collaborated with the Boston Society of Civil Engineers and Suffolk University Associate Professor Pat Hogan, to develop a STEM Professional Educator/Mentor Program. The REB submitted the STEM Professional Educator-Mentor Program proposal to @Scale. @Scale is an initiative of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, focused on creating a portfolio of education enhancement projects that are aligned with the goals of the Commonwealth's STEM Plan. Although the Educator/Mentor project was not selected for funding, the REB also collaborated with the Central MA Workforce Investment Board (WIB), which submitted a successful proposal for the STEMPower Workforce Network. The STEMPower Network partners include the sixteen WIBs/REBs and their One-Stop Career Centers, creating a statewide network committed to developing and sustaining a skilled workforce to meet the needs of STEM sectors. The REB continues to collaborate with STEMPower and the statewide STEM networks overseen by the Department of Higher Education. The REB is also working on Metro North-specific STEM initiatives, developing annual STEM events for the region.

The REB's STEM Partnership continues to work on ensuring a pipeline to STEM occupations for youth as well as for adults making career transitions, and to more accurately assess and address the skills gap in order to align education and training to job demands in STEM occupations.

Information Technology

Another industry that the Metro North will be focusing on is information technology (IT). The sectors in this industry include hardware, software, network communication, and IT services. The IT industry is highly interconnected, continuously developing linkages among these sectors as well as with sectors outside of the industry. New enterprises, along with established businesses, leverage ever-expanding technology developments in telecommunications, mobile, media, robotics, and other fields to develop products for global markets and provide services for regional customers. Because of the changing dynamics of this industry and the speed at which it moves, businesses in the state must continually innovate in order to grow.⁷

The IT industry has seen major growth nationally and regionally. In Metro North, employment in the information technology industry grew 6.7% from 2009 to 2010, resulting in 27,865 IT jobs. The majority of growth was in the sectors of software and IT services. In 2010, the average monthly employment in the software sector was 8,001 and the average weekly wages were \$2,664. This compares to the average monthly employment of 6,867 and an average weekly wage of \$2,538 in 2009. As for the IT services subsector, in 2010, the average monthly employment was 13,043 and the average weekly wages were \$2,305. This compares to the average monthly employment of 12,642 and an average weekly wage of \$2,193 in 2009. Analysts project that Metro North employment in the IT industry will increase by 4,200 more jobs between 2010 and 2012.⁸

In 2009, the Donahue Institute of the University of Massachusetts conducted focus groups and administered surveys among IT firms and businesses. These participants had a number of concerns with regard to workers in the field of technology. Issues surrounding K-12 STEM education as well as training undergraduates for employment in the IT industry emerged repeatedly. Participants noted that "real world" experience, in the form of internships, co-ops, and marketable skills upon graduation, was essential to accessing and "capturing" young workers. However, running effective programs was a challenge because getting interns up to speed in the short period of their internship was difficult.

⁷ The IT Industry: Hub of the Massachusetts Technology Economy, UMASS Donahue Institute, 2009

⁸ Mass.gov; Employment and Wages (ES-202)

Additionally, several participants felt that getting K-12 students interested in technology and keeping them in Massachusetts should be priorities. With regard to the workforce, finding senior level talent was a concern for focus group participants. Nearly a third of survey respondents also reported having difficulty finding experienced workers, software engineers in particular.⁹

IT occupations have an excellent return on investment when examining job salaries and the level of education required for the job. IT training ranges from post-secondary certification to PhD degrees. As of 2011, the average annual salary in Metro North for occupations that required at least an IT certificate and/or associate's degree (computer support specialists, computer repair, etc.) was \$63,382. There are also IT occupations that mostly require bachelor's degrees, but may accept individuals with associate's degrees such as network systems administrators, computer systems analyst, etc. For these types of positions, the average annual salary in Metro North is \$88,455. Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on one's perspective, businesses are in need of filling these IT positions. Analysts project that Metro North employment in occupations that require an associate's or less will experience a 16.9 percent growth by 2020. IT occupations that mostly require bachelor's degrees, but may accept individuals with an associate's, will experience a 27.4 percent growth in the Metro North by 2020.¹⁰

Ensuring Responsiveness to Populations Most in Need

If successful, the REB's sectoral approach will take into account the needs of people from all points in the educational spectrum, and link the work of providers focused on these needs with the consortium efforts. In addition to career center partners and occupational skills training providers, providers of youth programs and adult basic education and ESOL services are critical to addressing workforce development issues. It is also the REB's intention to lead or participate as a partner in the development of programs designed to serve specific target populations, e.g., persons with disabilities, veterans, ex-offenders, homeless persons, and to link these programs to sectoral efforts whenever possible.

Adult Basic Education. The REB has an investment in advancing adult basic education (ABE) initiatives. In recent years, the National Commission on Adult Literacy has conducted in-depth research and determined that previous adult education systems have been ill-equipped to meet 21st century needs. According to research, as of 2012, 32 million adults are illiterate in this country. Although Metro North is home to some of the most prestigious institutes in the world, and 47.5 percent of the labor force in Boston/Metro North had bachelor's degrees or higher in 2008 – 2010, there is still a large number of adults who lack basic literacy skills. Specifically, in 2008 - 2010, nearly 150,000 of Boston/Metro North's working-age residents (14.9 percent) lacked a high school degree. Without completing high school and obtaining further education or training, many residents cannot participate fully in today's labor market.¹¹

The National Commission on Adult Literacy recommended that “the adult education and literacy system in this country be transformed into an adult education and workforce skill system, with the new mission of attainment of post-secondary and workforce readiness.” Specifically, the Commission suggests the implementation of career pathways and bridge programs that “move low-skilled adults through a continuum of workforce-oriented adult education programs on to post-secondary (degree and non-degree certificate) programs that lead to...career advancement.” Contextualized curricula are also recommended, which teach literacy and numeracy while focusing on the skills needed in a chosen occupation identified in a Career Pathway plan or to priority industries in the region. The Commission

⁹ The IT Industry: Hub of the Massachusetts Technology Economy, UMASS Donahue Institute, 2009

¹⁰ Mass.gov; Employment and Wages (ES-202)

¹¹ Labor Market Trends in the Boston/Metro North Region, The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2012

also proposes that entities such as Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and career centers participate in an adult education and workforce skill system by helping to engage employers and connect them to post-secondary entities so that curricula and business workforce needs align.¹²

Youth-Specific Activities. Priorities for youth services include: working to increase the number of internship opportunities that are created in Metro North REB priority industry areas; expanding other opportunities to expose in-school and out-of-school youth to career options in growth industries; continuing to strengthen relationships between career centers and youth program vendors to ensure maximum opportunity to provide tailored work readiness services; and searching and applying for grants that will allow expansion of youth programming at both career centers. The AMP It Up! project is an example of how the REB will support such efforts (in this case, with a specific focus on advanced manufacturing education and occupations).

Ensuring Customer Choice

Although the REB's goal is to focus efforts on priority industries and occupations, the REB recognizes that not everyone's interests and skills correspond to these priority opportunities. To ensure a broad range of career options is available to all, the REB will continue to provide training in a variety of industries and occupations, as long as the training courses meet threshold criteria for quality services. Similarly, job search and referral services will be provided for openings posted in the full range of industries and occupations. Business services will also be available for public and private entities representing the complete array of industries.

Priority 3: Accountability and Visibility (The Reporting Stage)

The REB expects to increase its visibility through the publicity garnered from excelling in its core work as well as its implementation of sectoral approaches. The REB's core work includes: 1) overseeing career centers as the primary service delivery agent in the region; 2) administering state funds and overseeing programs, including YouthWorks, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) ABE Career Pathways and Connecting Activities programs; administering federal funds, including Employment Services funds and Workforce Investment Act Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; and contracting with training providers and career centers, and monitoring the related programs.

The REB has always been well-known for its ability to manage with data to ensure strong outcomes and perform meaningful evaluations. As the REB develops and implements relevant and important workforce strategies within the region, the REB will use its research and evaluation capacity to inform and strengthen partnerships, acting as a resource to other stakeholders. As the REB works to form effective partnerships, it will gain credence as a convener, a resource for up-to-date industry trends and best practices, and a forward-thinking organization that creates meaningful impact.

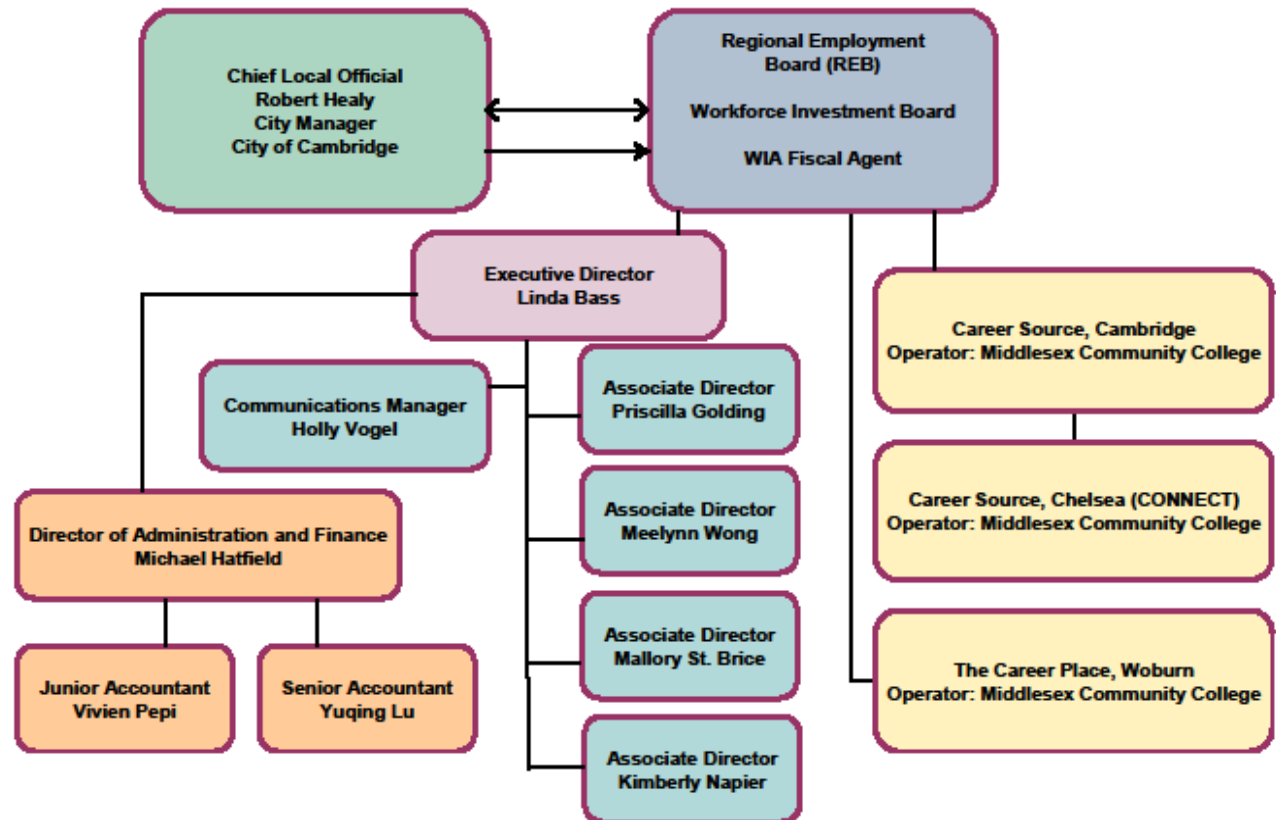
The REB intends to market its work and priorities through an updated marketing plan, which will include revitalizing its website. The goals and objectives that are established in this priority will enable entities, new and old, to know who the REB is, what the REB does, how it adds value, and why joining in its work makes sense.

¹² Guide to Adult Education for Work, Workforce Development Strategies Group, 2009

VIII. Conclusion

Over the next three plus years, the REB will apply both tried and true best practices and innovative approaches to enhance and expand its work. In spite of fiscal challenges, the region is committed to an all-out effort to maintain the quality and range of services that have made the Metro North REB and its career centers outstanding in their ability to assist a large volume of customers in achieving their goals of initial attachment or reattachment to the workplace. At the same time, the Metro North REB will make a concerted effort to implement new strategies that will address the skills gap. In FY 2013 - FY 2016, the REB will work to enhance infrastructure in order to operate more efficiently and effectively within the current financial constraints. Resource development and greater, more meaningful engagement of stakeholders will be crucial to the sustainability of both the REB and the system. The REB will continue its efforts to: create deeper, effective relationships with businesses; enhance the capacity of career centers to provide focused services tailored to the needs of job seekers; ensure access to career center services by customers with natural barriers to participation; create new partnerships that foster effective communication among employers, labor, training providers, education providers, community-based organizations, and career centers in order to create career pathways and to align education and training with business needs; and expand the horizons for youth most in need.

Metro North Regional Employment Board
Organizational Structure
Updated 10.1.12



Priority 1: Infrastructure and Systems Development					
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
1.1	Resource Development: Maintain or exceed current funding and diversify revenue streams	• Identify and apply for 4 grant opportunities each fiscal year (e.g., WCTF, Rapid Response Set Asides/NEGs, Ticket to Work, H1B, MassDevelopment, USDOL, DESE, foundations, private, etc.)	End of each fiscal year	25%	
		• Support 2 companies or consortia each fiscal year with Workforce Training Fund (WTF) applications	End of each fiscal year		
		• Outline a comprehensive legislative outreach strategy (emailing, visiting, etc.)	12/14	50%	
		• Implement legislative strategy; visit or phone key legislators or their staff; invite to events	Nov & Apr of each year	25%	
		• Host an event each fiscal year to educate legislative representatives on workforce development issues	End of each fiscal year	25%	
1.2	Partnership Development: Increase collaboration among workforce development stakeholders (businesses, education and training providers, career centers, etc.)	• Develop an industry partnership/consortium in each of the 4 priority industries and STEM (see Priority #2)	6/15	60%	
		• Fund or participate in at least 3 pilot projects that test innovative ideas/best practices through collaboration, e.g., CONNECT, MNCCP, etc.	6/16	67%	
		• Development an employer engagement strategy to identify employees who are interested in volunteering and add employees to an employer engagement list (pilot strategy with ABE)	12/14		
1.3	REB Membership Development: Increase REB membership in priority industries and regularly engage REB members	• Recruit and maintain a total of 3 board members from Advanced Manufacturing companies	6/14	100%	
		• Recruit and maintain a total of 3 board members from Healthcare companies	6/14	100%	
		• Recruit and maintain a total of 3 board members from Life Sciences companies	6/15	67%	
		• Recruit and maintain a total of 3 board members from Info Technology companies	6/16	33%	
		• Recruit and maintain a board member for Youth Council Chair	12/13	100%	
		• Recruit and maintain at least 4 board members for the PFO Committee including a co-chair	6/14	80%	
		• Recruit and maintain at least 4 board members for the Career Center Committee including a co-chair	6/14	75%	
		• Recruit and maintain at least 4 board members for the ABE Transitions Committee including a co-chair	6/14	25%	
		• Implement a board meeting feature of highlighting one or two members, their work, company, industry challenges, and expectations regarding the value of REB membership	12/14		
		• Implement an approach of highlighting various REB members (by featuring articles and/or interviews with REB members) on the website and through press releases to local papers	12/13	100%	8/13
1.4	Efficiency and Effectiveness: Streamline and simplify internal systems and processes in order to make more time available for high-priority items	• Move contract preparation to fiscal department as feasible	12/14		
		• Simplify career center funding formula to reduce staff time spent by 50% in order to focus on high-priority items	6/14		
		• Cross-train staff and develop written training materials as time allows	6/14		
		• Update and systematize policies as well as update personnel handbook (vacation policy)	6/14	20%	
		• Revise procurement policy to accommodate unique situations identified in FY'13	12/13	100%	9/13
		• Update career center charter	11/13		
		• Compile and/or develop standard operating procedures	6/14		

Priority 2: Alignment of Workforce and Business Needs

2.1 Advanced Manufacturing					
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
2.11	Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC): Develop consortium or link to/build upon existing consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and co-lead a partnership called Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) with four (4) Northeast MA regions (Metro North, Greater Lowell, Merrimack Valley, North Shore) that include at least: 4 WIBs, 3 Community Colleges, 5+ Voc Techs, 5 Career Centers, 1 Trade Association, 16+ Manufacturing Companies (and their Labor Reps), and representatives from economic development 	6/12	100%	10/12
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an MOU that clearly defines roles for all NAMC partners 	12/13	50%	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain funding for and hire a Manufacturing Market Manager whose primary role is to engage manufacturing employers (from Metro North and the North Shore) in the work of the NAMC 	1/14		
2.12	Career Pathways: Articulate career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a pathways chart that includes detailed occupational tracks and outlines various entry points (along with education/training level required) 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate finalized pathways chart to all of the following entities: Metro North career centers, education and training providers, high schools, voc techs, and community colleges 	End of each fiscal year		
2.13a	Curriculum Alignment: Ensure alignment of training with business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link one or more advanced manufacturing employers to one or more ABE providers to develop a contextualized curriculum or module 	6/13	100%	1/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAMC to support community college/voc tech in development of training curricula aligned with business needs 	6/13	100%	6/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market Manager visits at least 25 Metro North businesses and conducts field research by talking to managers and workers about current opportunities for growth or educational/training needs 	6/15		
2.13b	Training and Job Placement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to 18 jobseekers (through NAMC) based on needs of adv. manuf. employers 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ABE training (contextualized advanced manufacturing module) to 10 participants 	6/13	100%	6/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 300 jobseekers each fiscal year (through Career Centers) into manufacturing jobs 	End of each fiscal year	25%	
2.14	Resource Development: Support industry research and training needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for funding (through the NAMC) for a Workforce Competitiveness Training Fund Grant to support career development in advanced manufacturing 	6/13	100%	1/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for funding from MassDevelopment to support NAMC staffing and employer outreach 	6/13	100%	12/12
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for one or more WTF grants to support training for incumbent workers from a consortium of manufacturers with common training needs 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for funding for AMP It Up Grant 	6/13	100%	12/12
2.15	Knowledge-Sharing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor 4 info sessions for educators, career centers, and youth through AMP it Up 	6/13	100%	4/13 and 5/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a web resource (like the STEM Resource) for advanced manufacturing 	6/15	10%	
2.16	Exposure to Career Options:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit 10 - 15 youth to enroll in hands-on advanced manufacturing workshops 	6/13	100%	6/13
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an online (and hard-copy) brochure on careers in manufacturing for distribution to youth as part of AMP It Up 	6/14		

2.2	Healthcare				
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
2.21	Healthcare Partnership: Develop consortium or link to/build upon existing consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit 4 additional members for Healthcare Partnership from either hospitals, EMTs, long-term care, home health, or community health works 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit 1 Program Navigator or high school guidance counselor for Healthcare Partnership to attend periodically 	6/14	100%	6/13
2.22	Career Pathways: Articulate career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update current career pathways tool (through Healthcare Partnership) to reflect changes resulting from healthcare reform 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute finalized career pathways tool to: schools, youth programs, career centers, education/training providers, ABE providers 	End of each fiscal year		
2.23a	Curriculum Alignment: Ensure alignment of training with business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link healthcare employers to education and training providers as well as career centers for purposes of curriculum development, through partnership meetings or subcommittee 	6/15		
2.23b	Training and Job Placement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide occupational training (through ITAs) in healthcare to 50 jobseekers per year 	6/16	25%	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ABE training that is contextualized around healthcare (through DESE Career Pathways) to 100 participants 	6/14		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Allied Healthcare training with certification (through CONNECT/WIF) to 15 participants 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place 400 jobseekers each fiscal year (through Career Centers) into jobs in the healthcare industry 	End of each fiscal year	25%	
2.24	Resource Development: Support industry research and training needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposal(s) as lead or partner for Healthcare Workforce Transformation Funds and/or Workforce Training Fund in order to support additional healthcare training for new or incumbent workers 	6/14		
2.25	Knowledge-Sharing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a healthcare listserv and distribute information quarterly to listserv members (partnership, schools, career centers, education/training providers, employers) 	3/13	100%	9/12
2.26	Exposure to Career Options:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a career event each fiscal year (info sessions and career fairs) by providing healthcare information and resources 	End of each fiscal year	25%	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote one or more tours or job shadow opportunities at a healthcare venue for a component of in-school and out-of-school youth programs 	6/15		
2.3	Information Technology				
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
2.31	Information Technology: Develop consortium or link to/build upon existing consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit for info technology consortium a minimum of 3 employers and 3 representatives from the training and education community (1 community colleges, 1 vocational technical school, other training providers, or ABE; 1 representative from alternative staffing firms, other WIBs, and/or career centers) 	12/14		
2.32	Career Pathways: Articulate career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop career ladders chart with various entry points and education/training criteria 	6/15		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate career ladders chart to: Metro North career centers, education and training providers, high schools, voc techs, and community colleges 	6/16		

2.33a	Curriculum Alignment: Ensure alignment of training with business needs	• Link one or more info technology employers to one or more ABE providers to develop a contextualized curriculum or module	6/15		
		• Collect information from 3-5 companies on needs and/or growth opportunities through partnership meetings or focus groups, or via one-on-one meetings, visits, etc.; share with education and training providers, schools, career centers, and community colleges	6/14		
2.33b	Training and Job Placement:	• Provide occupational training (through ITAs) in info technology to 40 jobseekers each year	6/16	25%	
		• Place 200 jobseekers each fiscal year (through Career Centers) into computer and mathematical occupations	End of each fiscal year	25%	
2.34	Resource Development: Support industry research and training needs	• Identify two funding opportunities that would help to position a new IT consortium	6/16		
		• Assist with WTF or other incumbent or new worker training opportunities	6/16		
2.35	Knowledge-Sharing:	• Develop an info technology listserv and distribute information on an as needed basis to listserv members (partnership, schools, career centers, education/training providers, employers)	6/15		
2.36	Exposure to Career Options:	• Participate in or collaborate on a career event (info sessions and career fairs) by providing info technology information and resources	6/15		
2.4	Life Sciences				
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
2.41	Life Sciences Partnership: Develop consortium or link to/build upon existing consortium	• Form a preliminary Strategic Advisory Committee with 3-6 business reps from life science companies	3/14		
		• Recruit for life science consortium a minimum of 6 employers and 4 representatives from the training and education community (2 community colleges, 1 vocational technical school, other training providers, or ABE; 1 representative from alternative staffing firms, other WIBs, and/or career centers)	9/14		
2.42	Career Pathways: Articulate career pathways	• Develop a career pathways tool (with various entry points and education/training criteria) for life science or adapt an existing career pathways tool	6/15		
		• Disseminate finalized career pathways tool to schools, career centers, education/training providers, community-based organizations, community colleges	End of each fiscal year		
2.43	Curriculum Alignment: Ensure alignment of training with business needs	• Link one or more life science employers to one or more ABE providers to develop a contextualized curriculum or module	6/15		
		• Collect information from 3-5 life sciences companies on needs and/or growth opportunities through partnership meetings, focus groups, one-on-one meetings, visits, etc.; share with education and training providers	6/15		
	Training and Job Placement:	• Provide occupational training (through ITAs) in life sciences to 10 jobseekers per year	6/16	25%	
		• Place 80 jobseekers each fiscal year (through Career Centers) into scientific occupations	End of each fiscal year	25%	
2.44	Resource Development: Support industry research and training needs	• Apply for a Workforce Training Fund Technical Assistance Grant or another grant to support a needs assessment/and business engagement strategy	6/14		
		• Apply for a Workforce Training Fund Program Grant or another grant to train entry-level workers and/or incumbent workers	6/15		

2.45	Knowledge-Sharing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a life science listserv and distribute information quarterly to listserv members (partnership, schools, career centers, education/training providers, and employers) 	12/14		
2.46	Exposure to Career Options:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide one or more company tours or job shadow opportunities (through the Youth Council) Participate in or collaborate on a career event each fiscal year (info sessions and career fairs) by providing life sciences information and resources 	6/14; 6/15 End of each fiscal year		
2.5	STEM				
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	4-Year Progress %	Date Attained
2.51	STEM Partnership: Develop consortium or link to/build upon existing consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit 4 representatives of education providers or employers for STEM partnership 	6/14	50%	
2.52	Career Pathways: Articulate career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create STEM resource guides for 2 events that identify pathways to key occupations and outline education, skills, and qualifications required Participate in clean energy events to identify opportunities for growth and connect to STEM 	6/15 6/14	50%	
2.53	Curriculum Alignment: Ensure alignment of training with business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview 4 business reps in STEM occupations to collect information and give guidance to education and training providers as well as career centers 	6/14	100%	6/13
2.54	Resource Development: Support industry research and training needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for 2 STEM funding opportunities, e.g., through the STEM Network, to support the pursuit of STEM occupations by youth and adult career changers 	6/14	100%	7/13
2.55	Knowledge-Sharing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a STEM listserv and distribute information quarterly to listserv members (partnership, schools, career centers, education/training providers, employers) Sponsor a STEM event each fiscal year that connects education providers and STEM employers (high schools, voc. techs, community colleges, career centers, etc.) Participate with STEM power network and offer 2 STEM orientations for career centers Develop and distribute STEM newsletter semi-annually 	3/13 End of each fiscal year 1/14 End of each fiscal year	100% 25% 75%	9/12
2.56	Exposure to Career Options:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote 2 STEM-related activities for youth as an integral part of WIA Youth programs, Connecting Activities, and/or YouthWorks Update the STEM Resource on REB website each year 	6/15 End of each fiscal year	25%	
2.6	Other Industries/Occupations				
2.61	Training and Job Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide occupational training in non-priority industries/occupations as appropriate based on customer choice and education/skill levels, e.g., hospitality, transportation, installation and repair occupations; train 175 in non-priority occupations each year Participate as lead or partner in the development of 4 programs designed to serve special target populations, e.g., persons with disabilities, veterans, ex-offenders, homeless 	End of each fiscal year 6/16	25% 50%	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate a summer youth employment program in 4 - 6 communities each year 	August of each year	25%	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide at least 150 youth internship opportunities via Connecting Activities in priority and other industries each year 	End of each fiscal year	25%	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer ABE career pathways programs to approximately 100 adult learners each year (referenced also in the Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare Industry sections above) 	End of each fiscal year	25%	
Priority 3: Accountability and Visibility					
	Goals	Objectives and Related Action Steps	Deadline	Progress %	Date Attained
3.1	REB as Resource: Enhance the REB's visibility as a disseminator of information, a provider of technical assistance, and a valuable workforce development resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and disseminate labor market and industry trend reports semi-annually to career centers, education and training programs, schools, businesses, etc. via email or information sessions Develop a marketing plan to include newsletters, social media, etc. (research ways other WIBs or workforce development organizations leverage social media) Enhance REB website by including resources for each priority industry and links to social media as well as continuing to update the website with relevant news items and opportunities Distribute a REB newsletter quarterly that highlights events and news of interest Distribute Executive Director update email quarterly on the work of the REB 	End of each fiscal year 6/15 6/14 6/14 6/13	25% 50% 	
3.2	REB as Convener of Partners and as Active Partner: Position the REB as the convener in the workforce development system; actively participate in meetings convened by other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene at least 2 meetings each fiscal year for each developed industry partnership/consortia Convene at least 2 meetings each fiscal year for training providers, ABE providers, and career centers to share information, collect input for planning purposes, and enhance collaboration. Convene at least 8 youth related meetings each fiscal year: Youth Council, YouthWorks, WIA Youth, Connecting Activities Convene at least 2 meetings each fiscal year for each REB committee and/or industry partnership/consortium (once developed) Attend at least 10 meetings each fiscal year held by community partners to enhance collaboration and REB's visibility (includes meetings with businesses, education/training providers, OSCC, etc.) 	End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year	25% 25% 25% 25% 25%	
3.3	Performance Excellence: Oversee, track, and report workforce development performance and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve or exceed performance goals for WIA and other grants each fiscal year Review performance for all grant sub-recipients at least twice per year; monitor progress against goals Compile career center performance reports at least twice each fiscal year to keep stakeholders abreast of progress Track REB performance and activities against benchmarks and report out at least annually 	End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year End of each fiscal year	25% 25% 25% 25%	